

Special Teams Coordinator Fleming Takes Responsibility For Struggles Throughout The Season



One of the biggest criticisms of this No. 2-ranked Ohio State team has been special teams and how it has many times put the defense into field position or even kept the offense off of the field in some cases. Special teams coordinator Parker Fleming took responsibility for the underperformance of the unit.

“There are a lot of plays that we wish we had back for one reason or another,” Fleming said. “There’s some we’re really excited and happy with. Obviously, you could probably point to a bunch of individual plays that we wish we had done differently in one way or another, and those are probably warranted.”

There have been many different individual examples of mistakes that continue to add up week after week. A few that stick out are two fake punts that were not supposed to be fakes according to Ryan Day. One came against Maryland when long snapper John Ferlmann bounced the snap to Cody Simon instead of getting it to punter Jesse Mirco, and Simon was unable to scramble for the first down putting the Terrapins in great field position to score.

The other fake was against Rutgers when Mirco took the snap from Ferlmann and ran the ball himself to the left side, unable to get the first down and setting the Scarlet Knights up for a field goal in a play that Day has called a miscommunication, though he didn’t say where the miscommunication came from.

“Anything that happens that’s not good, that’s on me to get it fixed,” Fleming said. “The way we look at it around here is we try to put our players in the best position to make plays. When they make plays, that’s awesome, that’s them making plays. When they don’t, I didn’t prepare them well enough to make the play.”

Communication issues have been consistent on special teams going back to at least the end of last season when the Buckeyes attempted to fake a punt against Michigan in a four-point game in the third quarter when the snap was supposed to go directly to Mitch Rossi with the left side open but went to Mirco who had to get off a quick punt so it wouldn’t be blocked. Day defended Fleming Nov. 7, saying the team wouldn’t consider making a mid-season change at coordinator.

"I watch Parker every day and I see the way he coaches," Day said. "And I think he's a great teacher and a great coach. I can just tell you that he works as hard as anybody in the building."

Fleming talked about how at many points the special teams unit has been good, but acknowledged even despite that they need to be better at eliminating the individual bad plays because they can be very costly.

"Our job is to change field position, create explosives," Fleming said. "We have opportunities to and we've done some of that. You look at the net field position in a bunch of games. We've won it. Right. People don't care about that because the big things can't happen, and they're right. You can't put your team in some situations that we have, and I totally understand that."